

EDGE CITY
2000
Number 15

Student Literary Magazine
Mansfield University

1999-2000 Edge City Staff

Editor: Amy DeMarco

Editorial Staff: Joseph Caraciolo
Danielle Stilson

Advisor: Dr. John Ulrich

Thank you to Mu Xi Literary Society for
sponsoring this magazine and thank
you to the English
Department for its support.

EDGE CITY is sponsored by Mu Xi
Literary Society and funded by the
Student Activity Fee.

Table of Contents

4 Letter from the Editor

- 5 Afterthought *Amy M. Abbate*
- 6 Winter Satisfaction *Kerry Kearns*
- 7 Mid-Night Enchantment *Tonya Baumgarner*
- 8 It is Love *Amy M. Abbate*
- 9 Writer's Block *Karen Holgate*
- 9 Alive *Danielle Stilson*
- 10 Wedding Vow *C. E. Nhamercedes*
- 12 The Widow of 1945 *Lamar Crawford*
- 13 Strength *Suzanne Yeager*
- 14 Brick Layer *Amy M. Abbate*
- 16 Procrastinator's Anon. *Karen Holgate*
- 17 Mandarin Bliss *Kerry Kearns*
- 18 Off My Medication *C. E. Nhamercedes*
- 22 Untitled *Heather Butler*
- 23 Lies *Danielle Stilson*
- 24 The Oak Tree *Lamar Crawford*
- 26 The Cutting Edge *Jennifer L. Shaffer*
- 27 The Quick of Scent *E. M. Schorb*
- 28 Sometimes Dreaming Works Better *Nicole Nemeth*
- 29 Streetlight Homesick *Danielle Stilson*
- 30 The Path *Anthony Brown*
- 31 Grow Again *Minelle Sallade*

Letter From the Editor

This is the third year in a row that *Edge City* has been printed and I am thankful to be a part of it once again. The year 2000 is upon us, and unlike certain promised catastrophes, *Edge City* makes an appearance. I would like to thank everyone who submitted works to this magazine; it takes a strong person to allow their work to be read and possibly criticized by peers and strangers. Possessing the title "Student Literary Magazine," *Edge City* is an appropriate place for future writers to have their first publications. The fundamental facet that makes someone a writer is the written word, followed closely by publication.

To all those who had their works published, congratulations and I hope this publication represents a future in writing. Unfortunately due to space constraints we were not able to publish everything submitted. Those people who are not members of the table of contents should not give up hope. We liked everything submitted but simply do not have the funds to print them all.

I hope that this literary magazine continues producing editions and does not die out with the graduation of Danielle Stilson. I would like to extend a special thanks to both Danielle and Joseph Caraciolo for helping me get *Edge City* published. It seems graduation and senioritis have taken its toll on participation (as evident by the staff box.) I faced many obstacles and feared they were insurmountable with this publication, and can only hope next year will be different. Thank you and enjoy this year's *Edge City*.

Sincerely,
Amy DeMarco

Afterthought

And will we remember this?

Tomorrow...fifty years worth of tomorrow's?

Will we remember being undressed, or
intoxicated to such a degree that porno was entertaining?

Will we remember the embarrassment?

The shame?

Will we feel this moment?

And in the morning light, with the air clean and crisp,
will I forget this man, almost undressed, laying in my bed...so
beautiful, so innocent,
unlike me.

Will I remember?

Will I remember the want and the burn and the need to be
someone else— the need to be
someone?

And is this what college is about?

Alcohol, and sex, and lust and desire and desperation to such a de-
gree...

Can you understand my desperation?

Can you understand that I am looking?

Can you see what I see—who

I am?

This is my humility.

Winter Satisfaction

A cozy quilt of marshmallow hovering over
an open chocolate sea of shimmering relaxation.
Coming in from the snow capped mountains and frigid breezes
body glacial,
cheeks rosy red,
reach for me.
Hands trembling with frost bite you yearn
for the warmth of my steamy,
porcelain body.
Placing your lips to me
You gently blow into this bubbling chocolate volcano
in hopes of some kind of eruption.
Your eyes close suddenly as you lift me
to the sun.
I slither down into your mouth
while white marshmallow sits smug above your lip
You grasp my handle
placing me down above your countertop.
Licking your glistening,
red lips,
You look into me contentedly
and smile,
I satisfy you.

Mid-Night Enchantment

For once I wish
the world would face the wall
as I slither
into my black lycras
and creep down the streets
with the cats
that peer into my windows
at night.

I would cover the town,
dodging cars, stand around
a corner and watch
the drunks close the bars
scurry through the soggy cemetery,
kiss grandmother's headstone
and slip through the thick forest.

I would sit beneath the sagging
arches of a pine tree
and sink into the moist mossy ground;
press my back into the bark.

Wild dogs, rabid foxes
on the trail of my scent
would traipse over my footsteps
wet noses stirring the mud.

I would watch in silent
triumph,
by the light of the moon,
as they pass me by,
agitated, hungry,
growling deeply from their bellies.

I would inhale
from my stomach up to my lungs
the icy black air,
and release it, slowly with my soul.

It is Love

It is Love
that is not sane.
I am scared...
lost in my questions,
living in their quest for resolution,
suffocated by the waste that they yield, as the truth is revealed by me,
for me, to
me.

I am the causality and
I am the killer.
I see it all—happening—and allow it to
continue anyway.
Yes, I am the enemy, and yet
I pray for the ally.

Such treacherous knowing—realizations—
plague me unmercifully, yet
I make no attempt to really
act—to physically sever the causes
of their unavoidable effects—
for I am the puppet pulling
my own strings.

Writer's Block

Words, Words, Words
Creative thoughts wandering
Filling empty space
Refusing to come out
Holding images hostage
Denying the pen its glory
Teasing with glimpses
Only to rip them away
Leaving empty space
and a blank page

Danielle Stilson

Alive

Alive breathing Children!
How dare we crawl across this life
burning days
melting skin
charred bones brittle
bent necks carrying heads of white ash.
Kneeling
Praying.
Waiting
for someone
to come along
and set our fears on fire.

Wedding Vow

Loving you
is so

terrifying

uncomfortable comfort

I want so much
for all of this

to be real

I keep imagining
that it

will turn out to be

some sort of cruel joke

Like a lesson to be taught
to someone like me

for daring to love

someone like you

You say

my funny face is pretty

and so I feel it is

My heart melts

from the simple power of love

Each time

I look into your eyes

Your crystal eyes

deeper than Seneca

surely

Why do

The strands of lightness in your hair
make me want to hold
protect you

Why is there such

an aching in my soul
each time you go

Oh please

always
come
back.

The Widow of 1945

she sits on her porch
alone with her dog
waving to everyone that passes by

she says hello to everyone
alone on her porch
while they look at her with curious eyes

her husband died a POW
she talks about him all the time

he was an American spy
tortured by German soldiers

she reads the letter of her husband's death
I smell pain and loneliness leak from her breath

Nevertheless

she sits on her porch
alone with her dog

waving to everyone that passes by
without a single tear in her eye

Strength

Not a tear will you shed
For those deep in thought,
With memories that speak
The truth of reality's torturous hand,
You walk
With strength and dignity
For life's upsets
Will not pull you down.

Overcome with regret
In a moments time
Of how truths become sorrows,
And love becomes pain
With hatred of such fate
But still
You walk
With strength and dignity
For life's upsets
Will not pull you down.

Guilt may consume you
With memories that speak
The truth of reality's torturous hand;
A tear can be shed
Because you are strong...
And wise...and it's not your fault.

Brick Layer

Oh demons and devils and such glorious things,
frivolous and wicked
they come to me
Maddening I sit here, aware
of their breath,
waiting and hoping that I am not left.
Fallen lanterns, and pulsating throbs,
men and their kisses,
women and their sobs.
And oh Romeo, did you never exist,
except for the maiden who stole
your last kiss?
I linger through the night
(may this air not cease),
yearning to be discovered
in the crease of these sheets.
But I have seen the fire,
and I know the look.
I have been through the waiting—
I know what it took.
And he looks at her,
the whore on the corner,

the one in pure white,
the reverends daughter.
But what about me,
The mouse in the trap?
My soft sweet fur,
my delicate back.
Why wasn't I warned,
why wasn't I told,
that love only happens
before you grow old?
My heart is now hardened
in the clay of those bricks,
that come up by will
from their cruel selfish tricks.
Go from here you men!
Stay sway for good!
For I have no trust,
and I never should.

Procrastinator's Anon.

I'll do it today
I promise
I know I've said it before
This time I mean it
I swear you can count on me
I meant it when I said it
Then something came up
Something more important
Something that just couldn't wait
Something I'd rather do
I kept putting it off
Pushing it to the back burner
I should have known it couldn't wait
So many lost opportunities
Too many times when I missed out
Time always slips away
I'll change my ways
I'll turn over a new leaf
Become more responsible
Do everything today

Tomorrow

Mandarin Bliss

MIDNIGHT ADVANCES THROUGH
ONCE UNTOUCHED BOUNDARIES
GRAZING YOUR ROUGHCAST BODY
INTOXICATED KISSES
FRIENDSHIP LEANING
TOWARDS
MANDARIN FILLED ECSTASY
SUGARED TEARS
SATURATING
MY FLUSH COLORED SOUL
ALE TINGED LUST
PLEASE
LAY HERE WITH ME
TONIGHT LET'S BE LOVERS
SOFT SPOKEN
WHISPERS
WE'LL ALWAYS BE FRIENDS
BUT TONIGHT
YOU'VE GOT ME WILD
TANGO, TONGUES
SPARKLE TAINTED LIPS
TUMBLING IN CIRCLES
DOWN THIS FLESH COVERED EMBANKMENT
SAY GOOD-BYE
TOMORROW WE'LL GO BACK TO BEING FRIENDS.

Off My Medication

I really shouldn't write when I'm off my medication. It's liable to turn out like the essay I sent to the newspaper that time, about Everett and how he got burned up in his own bed. But the damned loops are running in my head again, and taking the meds tonight isn't going to stop it anytime soon. Unless I double or triple the dose, which I ain't gonna do. So I can sing, or cry, or hit myself to sleep, or I can sit down and write this visceral blob until it quits coming out of me, yellowish and chunky and stinking.

It's cold tonight, or should I say this morning. Reminds me of the time Dad drank the heating oil money and we had to get dressed in front of the open oven in the mornings and take real showers in the girl's locker rooms at school to get any warm water. Ever take cold showers in the winter, when you're not even horny? It really sucked. I'm still not sure why I don't close the windows and turn the heat on, except that my wife is a polar bear in the disguise of a fertility goddess. (The gentle and powerful Marie.)

I get pretty depressed and crazy when I don't take the Navane they prescribe for me. The Prozac, well I could actually survive without that, except at certain times of the month. It seems to cut way down on my homicidal feelings, every twenty-eight days. Which is a good thing, considering that I have a gun now. For the occasional rabid bear, you understand. We live on the edge of town, the bears come through every month or so. Ok, it's really for the same reason that I lie to the shrink and stockpile my meds.

Do you want to know about my head, or am I boring you to death? I wish I knew. Hey, I wish I didn't care.

It really does surprise me, every time. I think I'm doing well on the meds, and then I forget to take them because life is going so well, and before I know what's hit me, the drowning in cement has begun again. I swear, it feels like I'm Sisyphus and the boulders made of pig dung, heavy and pungent. I forget to

eat, I forget to feed the pets, I forget that I just put on a pot of noodles on to simmer but I left it on high heat and then the hiss of the boilover reminds me that I've screwed up yet again. Yesterday that happened, and I asked Marie, why do you even ask me to cook anymore. Well, shit, at least I'm not burning the house down again like that time I was on my meds and they made me fall asleep on the couch with the stove on. Needless to say, I'm not on *those* meds anymore. (I never really told you about that, I'm sorry. I just kept being afraid that you wouldn't leave me alone at home anymore, that you'd stop working entirely to take care of me, and then by the time that I'd gotten over that, I was afraid that you'd be mad that I hadn't told you earlier.

Wait; wait; now you've probably jumped to the conclusion that I killed Everett. I said burning the house down, not burned.

Teena Ireen told me, in the car while I was driving her to her community service. I slammed on the brakes, involuntarily, and nearly drove up on the sidewalk. But we were on the Westside of Red Bank, so traffic was light, and we just sat there for a moment, looking at each other. I'm sorry, she said, I thought you knew. The funeral was last week.

They buried him in the Southland, my childhood friend Everett. Somebody set his house on fire because Everett the Dummy had been smart enough to backsass him in front of the guy's 'normal' friends. Imagine, being so f-d up that you have to get murderous revenge on another guy when your so-called friends laugh at you. That man is in hell, and he's not even dead yet. I hope that you never get to any point near there, David. I know that you'd like to be more accepted by other straight men, but that kind of overzealous machismo will make you think that life's not worth living.

Everett's buried in South Carolina, or Alabama, or someplace like that. His whole family moved back there, apparently, after his passing. I wonder how badly Blanche took it. She's his sister. She was always nice to me. I guess that she could tell that I was sort of like Everett, vulnerable to ridicule and slow on the uptake. While I pretended to be just like everyone else, kids and even some grownups laughed at me on

a regular basis. I remember looking at their smiles, thinking, how stupid can you people be. My reality is just as real as yours is. But, you don't get that. I wouldn't even bother to shake my head at them; I'd just walk away.

It's like that, when I'm off my meds. Reality shifts, and memories intrude as if they were happening right now. Just like when I was twelve, and the behaviorists had got their hooks into me. Judy Clauss-Blair was the second one's name, and she'd ask me to recall things so that she could pull them apart, the memories, and reconstruct them into a semblance of a normal childhood. But I never could recall anything happy. I'd sit there in the little square office on the corner near Fort Monmouth and look out the windows rather than answer, because I knew when I did that Julie would say, Oh come on now you have to be able to remember something positive, and I wouldn't be able to. I would have failed the only person I'd found that I could talk to, and then she'd probably pronounce me cured and throw me out onto the street again, to wait for my mother's dull green station wagon to pick me up and deliver me back to the purgatory that our nearly empty house had become. My sisters had all left, by then. Phoebe had disappeared in the beginning of her high school years, when I was in fifth or sixth grade, and Martha had spent her life away from the suffocating presence of Dad, staying with friends constantly. Carol had gone off to college, and then just not come back. Even Earle was there only part of the time, mostly in his new smaller room without the train table but still with Torture. But I could remember the time in the big yellow kitchen in the Highlands house, when Dad had made a sandwich and I'd thought it was for me, and I'd taken a bite out of it before he saw me and screamed bloody murder. He seemed astonished that I would dare to touch something that was his, and his alone. That's my sandwich, he'd said, and I'd looked up at him and, my mouth still holding the bite, said that I was sorry. That's *my* sandwich, he'd repeated, and then he looked around to see who else could be witness to this atrocity. He'd wanted to belt me. I could see it in his eyes. But I'd already apologized, and he could only keep repeating that it was his sandwich, and I'd fled the kitchen, the bite of sandwich turning to

mud in my mouth. I could remember that in the sixth grade I had written a mean note about another girl, the first time that I had ever dared to consider myself socially equal to others. I'd handed it to another girl, Debbie, who was also somewhat unacceptable by everyone else's standards, and that was as far as I'd meant it to go. But she circulated it, and almost the whole class of girls turned on me and ganged up on me after school and chased me home where I cried into the sink in the yellow kitchen, doing the dishes so that I didn't have to think about it do much, that they all hated me now. I could remember that when I'd won the science fair in the fourth grade, I'd gone with my Mom to visit the frogs I'd raised from guppies in my classroom afterwards, and we'd found the frogs dead, cooked by someone who'd turned the aquarium thermostat way up high. Their bodies were no longer froggy green, but a sort of off-white, and their shininess had dulled, and they were all stretched out, not moving, their bellies blown up round. I could remember that the summer that we'd move to Red Bank, the girl next door, who was a white Italian, had told me that there were gangs of black girls at school who'd bashed some white girl's head in for not giving over her lunch money, and that when I'd told my white father that I was afraid he had laughed at me, seeming to delight in my discomfort. But I couldn't remember one good thing, one thing that could be construed as having been pleasant. Finally, Judy would end the session and tell me to come back in a week, and I would go down the narrow carpeted stairs. I'd go past the lobby bay windows that I'd threatened to break once after the first therapist, Nancy Silver, had told my parents that my illness was Mom's fault, and Dad had emerged smiling and preening. I would get into the back and lay down on the plastic seat, covering myself as much as I could with the brown plaid Chief Petty Officer shirtcoat that I carried everywhere. At 50 or at 95 degrees, that jacket held me close and told me that it loved me.

Funny, isn't it, how a coat can love you more better than people ever will, when you're a kid. Better, even, than your lovers.

Untitled

I want to be drugged. Not by chemicals, but by kisses.

I want to be high. The exuberate high only felt from the highly
addictive
kiss.

The soft, lingering kiss
The deep passionate, ravenous kiss.
The kiss that knocks you out until morning kiss.

Soft, hungry kisses over one's neck and shoulders. Gentle nib-
bling of the
ears. Wild, crazy free for all matches of lips.

It's all good. Each one. So incredibly and undeniably addic-
tive. Each one
leaves me begging for more.

Lies

There comes a time after you lose everything,
when even the things you pretend made you happy are gone,
That you stop telling yourself "Think good and feel good."
You realize it's OK for your stomach to turn inside out in grief
months later.

It's good to cry, even though you can't do anything about it.

Missing him after a year isn't crazy.

You loved him, It's human.

Feeling your soul lurch when you pass a boy who looks like
him

only to remember it can't be.

To drive by his house because that's the closest you can be to
him now.

Do these things.

Allow yourself a moment of despair.

It is always going to exist in the hollows of your heart.

Denial will not banish it.

The Oak Tree

They called him Oak
yes, that was his name
named after the same tree
from which he was hanged
his expression was void of any pain
a grin shaped his lips and
his cheeks were raised
he was the doll of a ventriloquist
the only thing hanging down was his neck

His double knotted shoelaces were looped

upward

the collar on his shirt was raised

upward

and outlining the back of his hairline

the hands on his watch were pointed

upright

12:00 PM

his kinky hairs were wires pointing

upward

as if signaling to a satellite

even the leaves on the tree were growing

upright

attempting to reach new heights

By why was the Oak's neck sagged

downward
and his face showed no sign of fright
what a strange chestnut he was hanging from
the Oak tree

Oak was even
up
when he was
down

They called him Oak
yes, that was his name
named after the tree
from which he was hanged
his expression was void of any pain

The Cutting Edge

The truck slid to a stop in the muddy soil of North Western Pennsylvania. Steel toed shoes stepped from the aged blue cab. Voices seemed to whisper through the trees, "He's here, he's here."

A metal saw slid along the bed liner back towards the tailgate. Seasoned hands, callused by time and labor, lifted the weapon from the truck.

Across the well used road two, maybe three, trees lay silent, their proud branches and trunks bent and broken by a passing storm.

With the pull of a string a deafening roar echoed through the once serene forest. Again the wind whispered through the trees, sadly now.

Heartlessly the roaring predator spread the life blood of a pine over the once youthful mossy roots of the tree. And the wind, maddened by rage, wailed through the arms of the standing trees.

Suddenly all is silent. The predator's roar, quiet. Even the wind seemed to be set at ease.

The close of a door.

The turn of a key.

Nothing has changed.

THE QUICK OF SCENT

A fireman was sleeping one night when he dreamed he smelled perfume—Chanel No.5, White Shoulders, My Sin—and he felt for his wife to discover that the bed was as empty as a candidate transplant heart, and as cold; of course, he thought, as he began to awaken, she has gone to visit her mother; but what of that perfume, that aroma of roses, that honeysuckle? He had been a fireman for a quarter of a century; he was a steady man; he would not bring a strange woman home, and he had no female friend, no mistress, so how could the bedroom be filled with the aroma of roses, of honeysuckle perfume? He turned on the light, but the room remained dark as night, and he thought the bulb must have blown. He tried another light, but the room remained dark. Was he going blind? In fact, his eyes were pouring forth tears. His wife would have been pleased. He missed her. But no, his skin burned. He coughed. And he couldn't find the bedroom door. He tripped and fell, and rested on the floor, face down. He smelled perfume. Perfume, perfume, perfume! It was as clear as...but nothing was clear, except that his brain felt clouded, and he was coughing; and yet he could think of this: "After many years of breathing smoke, they say it begins to smell like perfume, roses, honeysuckle..."

Sometimes Dreaming Works Better

A sweet rose scent comes from the fresh
red buds by the running water.

The air turns brisk and cold like an
unwanted draft.

The sky fills with dark blue clouds
with lizards and cheetahs sprinting
through the air

The garden weeps
towards the earth

Apple and Pear trees decompose
like a vulture's feast

My mind fills with visions
of yellow daffodils while
looking upon the
flowing river

Felling the calming sounds
around my soul.

Blood flows through my body
like a hawk drifting in the breeze

Coldness turns to warmth,
a moth becomes a butterfly.

Streetlight homesick

I walk carefully along a cement curb
contemplating Kerouac under a crisp sky
my mind wanders to the stars.

The cold void surrounds me
wind glides around buildings
to meet my laughter.

The moon
Bright on her perch beyond my outstretched arm
smiles her regards to a young sister
performing a balancing act in the dark.

Nighttime calls creatures wise to the daytime god
they peek from behind the dusk.
Day dims and we begin to dance
waving at each other through empty air.

Ahead a streetlight drops a buzzing puddle on the ground.
I walk through it and can't avoid wetting my feet.
My companions disappear behind it's sickly yellow glow,

I step beyond the artificial light
my hands lose themselves
and I reach home.

The Path

From the swirling red murky waters,
the breath of life transcends all
The path is just beginning,
like the endless pit of eternity.
Then I wait, wait until my eyes gloss over,
I hear sounds I can't understand
There are so many objects around
all but one unfamiliar.

The path takes me through what
destiny has planned for my soul.
Rocky, like the coral reefs of the Gulf
Yet smooth, like the outside of a marble.

I've loved and lost, lost my loves.
I came eye to eye with death,
It not only kills one, but a part of me, a part of you.
My armor had a chink, but now a gapping hole.

I've experienced hatred, with blood soaked eyes.
The path has taken from me what I have worked hard for.
Forged with sweat and blood, forged with my self.
Slipped away down the ice slope of life

I've dealt with pain, mental and physical.
Physical, when your legs burn and ache, but you don't stop.
Physical, when you're lightheaded and about to pass out.
Mental, knowing accepting the physical will help your being.

And now, I sit down on the path,
waiting and wondering will I stray from it.
This road less traveled is mine to endure.
I have to pull out my shears and cut my way on.

I peek through the brush, to see what the path holds
I see darkness in the light, and light in the darkness
I don't know where the path will cease, and what lies at the end,
but I keep trudging, through the muck, to my unending destination.

Grow Again

The human race has pushed and pulled and forced itself apart from all other life. We run from the wilderness like no other animal, seeking the habitat and the habits of our own making. Yet what we do not realize, what far too many of us choose to ignore, is that in all of our efforts, we have failed.

Science has told us that in every strand of DNA there exists the pattern for an entire species. Long before electron microscopes and biological warfare, we knew that a starfish could regenerate an arm or that some types of lizards could re-grow a tail. We knew that somehow, in a single seed there existed a mighty tree. And, we knew that deep down, mankind was the arm of a mighty starfish, and every man was a seed of the whole universe, always connected, and capable of infinity, if these seeds could only live long enough to grow to their fullness.

But the trees grew so tall they stopped looking to the stars. And now we look down at the grass. It makes us feel tall. And disconnected.

We feel that we have shed off nature as a snake that has shed its skin. We have pushed it off and left it there to decay. And from our stance on Olympus, we are the gods of this planet who treat it as we wish. Every day, we abuse the planet with landfills and strip mines. But worse, we choke the universe with lies, conceit, distrust, and hate. We drown ourselves in apathy, and say that one can not change the lives of thousands. Yet we marvel daily about how the words and actions of Einstein and Edison, Plato and Jefferson, Bill Gates or Bill Clinton can change and shape a people, a planet, a universe.

We are apart now. We are connected now. We will give, but we do not receive. We are benefactors of the universe through our own eyes, and every man is a legend in his own mind. But that which we give is not the beauty of electric light. It is a lack of need to look at the stars. What we bestow on the world is not a new and improved anything, but a lack of that which took to make it. We are the poisoners of a planet and the unfaithful lovers of the universe.

Our hope lies only in going home. We can undo our severance with the world, once and again, we can know the love we are capable of. If only one seed would once again turn to the stars. And reach.

